

## [I am a Coppenter]

Beliefs and Customs - Folk Stuff

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Herman Spector

ADDRESS 4121-Third Ave.

DATE

SUBJECT I Am A COPPENTER

1. Date and time of interview December 19, 1938
2. Place of Interview Beliska's Restaurant
3. Name and address of informant Anonymous, accosted at table.
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

None

5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

None

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6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

(See previous sketch: "Noboddy Boddas You")

FOLKLORE

NEW YORK

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER H. Spector

ADDRESS 4121-Third Ave.

DATE December 19, 1938

SUBJECT I AM A COPPENTER

Nacherlly de costoms is changing, it's a differents now, but to tell de troot I'm so lived in it dot I can't notice it changes. For a writer it is good on de East Side, he knows how to make from dese tings stories. I am a coppenter. Ask me about wood, I can toll you. De most from dese peoples, poor peoples, it don't intrest dem notting else but cohds (cards). See, dey fight over a nickel,)over notting. Dey don't even read papers. Evvy Jew suppost to know how to read de Jewish paper, no? Not even dot. If dey do read, dey read de yellow press, wot we call. Not editorial, an article, but holdops. . . you know, sensational. Dey are not class-conscience people. Frinstance, dictatorships. You have to tell dem de meaning from dictatorship. Hitler, Stalin: to dem is all de same. So I'm answering dem dis way. When a crook, suppose, you stop a crook from stealing, it's dictating, no? So it's dictating de working-people. You against dis? In differents ways I am trying to explain, I don't say I am a hundred percent, at least I know something. . .

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In dis place I am used to de food; is all right. Notting spetchal: de meat is good, cooked plain, nacherlly. I had goo times too: believe me, I am better off now. Fourteen tousand dollars I lost. In a building. Second [maggidge?]. It boomed up, it boomed down. Who loses? Who pays de defitsit?

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You can't be smart. You are smart one way, day take you anodder way. You invest money, suppose. It takes you twenty years to get it out, if you do get it out. Sometimes you don't get it out. So I am now, suppose, 48. When will I enjoy? For who? For my children. Suppose I don't got no children? It's a great foolishness.

No, gold is not flushing in de streets here. But dis is a fect: over here is de standard of living better dan over dere. Here is a democracy. Today evvybody got to get down on his knees and thank God he lives in dis country. Here You can live, you can try to make better. It's not a hundred percent. Like in my union. De liddership today is on de basis of reaction. It's a fect. De coppenter is not protected. Why is he not protected? Because dis is a hire and fire business. Dey have a scale, so if he wouldn't come down from de scale, so de boss fires him. Why? Dis is evvyting legal. On de basis of not producing enough, so he fires him. One out of a tousand maybe gets de scale. Frinstance de man goes to de Local and he says he's not getting de scale. De Business Manager says: so why do you work under scale? De Business Manager has a yearly job, mid a salary, wid expense - so he can hold out. So wot can de coppenter do? So I say, it's not a hundred percent. I wish it changes, believe me.

Funny stories I don't know eeder. About hospitals, one. In Gouveneer Hospital a coppenter went for a sickness. So de doctor tells him to bring a bottle for medicine. So he goes home and next day he brings a half-gallon from Itzick Kaiser whiskey, wid de labels; so he expects for medicine. De doctor asks: wot's dis? Evvybody laughed from him. To me dis is medicine, he says. But one feller, he was afraid from hospitals. He didn't have confidence; he was under de impression dey wanted to poison him. So de keeper said if you have no

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confidence, go home. I was near to dot man, he lived in my house; I tink his mind didn't work right. If it was money dot he tought dey would steal from, him I could understand. But he was a poor man. He told me dey hit him on de head dere, 3 [?] -3-

but I don't believe it. Kings County Hospital. It is like over here, Bellavue. He was under de impression, being de students need bodies for prektising, so he figured dey would poison him. I couldn't convince him he shouldn't be afraid. Nacherlly, de logic to it is very plain. He couldn't speak a word English. And de keepers dey are Gentile, dey couldn't understand him a word. So when he talks to his friends, he is afraid dot de keepers tink he is talking about dem.

Sometimes Jewish people is ignorant. In de hospital where my wife is dey have Irish nurses. Dey are good, I am telling you, like angels. So if dey don't talk Jewish, my wife's friends say: she's an Antisemitt. Dis isn't right. My wife is a class-conscience person: she explains, if you don't talk Jewish, it don't mean you are an Antisemitt. Dis is a mistake from ignorant people.